



STATE OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

Corning Tower The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza Albany, NY 12237

Antonia C. Novello, M.D., M.P.H., Dr.P.H.
Whalen
Commissioner

Dennis P.
Executive Deputy Commissioner

December 30, 2004

TO: All Health Care Providers, including Hospitals, Diagnostic and Treatment Centers, Nursing Homes, Adult Care Facilities, Home Care Agencies, Pharmacies, and County Health Departments

FROM: New York State Department of Health Bureau of Communicable Disease Control

Influenza Vaccine Shortage Advisory: Update #9

Please distribute immediately to all appropriate departments, including Infection Control Department, Emergency Department, Employee Health Service, Infectious Disease Department, Director of Nursing, Medical Director, and Director of Pharmacy.

1. Influenza Disease Activity

Influenza activity in New York State continued at the widespread level during the week ending December 25, 2004. During that week, one hospital and 21 long-term care facilities located in the counties of Bronx, Broome, Clinton, Franklin, Kings, New York, Oneida, Queens, Rockland, Schuyler, Suffolk and Westchester reported laboratory-confirmed nosocomial influenza cases or outbreaks to the NYSDOH. Additionally, laboratory-confirmed cases of influenza were reported in 42 counties. The nosocomial outbreaks are being controlled through the use of influenza antiviral treatment and prophylaxis, droplet precautions, and other recommended infection control measures. As the flu season progresses, summary information of influenza disease activity will continue to be available on the NYSDOH public website and the HIN/HAN/HPN. Please refer to the NYSDOH's website at <http://www.health.state.ny.us/nysdoh/flu/surveillance.htm> for weekly statewide influenza surveillance information.

2. Updated Standard of Care for Influenza Vaccination in New York State; 2004–05 Influenza Season.

Summary. While continuing to emphasize aggressive efforts to reach and vaccinate the original priority groups first, this update expands the New York State Department of Health Standard of Care for influenza vaccination where flu vaccine supplies are sufficient to include all adults aged 50–64 years, and out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of persons in high-risk groups effective Monday January 3, 2005.

Background. On December 22, 2004, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) updated the previous October 5, 2004 interim recommendations for influenza vaccination during the 2004-5 influenza season (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/pdf/whoshouldget.pdf>). CDC/ACIP recommend that, in areas where the available supply of influenza vaccine is sufficient to meet the local demand for vaccine from persons in the priority groups for vaccination (as described in the October 5, 2004 interim recommendations), the priority groups for vaccination could be expanded to include all adults aged 50–64 years and out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of persons in high-risk groups. The updated recommendations are effective Monday, January 3, 2005. The decision to expand priority groups in each area is left to the discretion of state and local health departments.

Since the October 5, 2004 announcement of the influenza vaccine shortage in the U.S., the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) in collaboration with county health departments and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene has worked with hospitals, physicians, and other health care providers to ensure an equitable distribution of available influenza vaccine supplies to persons in priority groups. In response to the December 22 updated CDC/ACIP recommendations, the NYSDOH conducted a survey of all local health departments, hospitals and nursing homes to determine current vaccine need and inventories. NYSDOH then worked with county health departments to meet any remaining vaccine need for persons in priority groups in hospitals and nursing homes and to transfer vaccine from counties with sufficient supplies to those in need. NYSDOH has also secured the early release of an additional approximately 25,000 vaccine doses from its January 2005 national allocation to give to counties with particularly large need.

Given these efforts to ensure that influenza vaccine is made available for persons in priority groups, NYSDOH has determined that the expanded CDC/ACIP recommendations can be implemented in New York State on January 3, 2005 where vaccine supplies allow.

Between now and January 3 we strongly encourage anyone in the current priority groups for vaccination who has not yet gotten a flu shot, but who wants to do so, to contact their physician or local health department to find out about the availability of vaccine.

Starting January 3rd, following the ACIP recommendations, the standard of care in New York State will be amended to allow private physicians who still have remaining vaccine to give flu shots to persons who meet the new vaccination criteria, as well as to those in the previous priority groups. Physicians should try to ensure that their high-risk patients have had an opportunity to get a flu shot before offering vaccine to patients who meet the new vaccination criteria.

The NYSDOH strongly recommends that aggressive efforts should continue to reach unvaccinated persons in high-risk priority groups and use available vaccine to vaccinate such persons. Vaccine providers and local health departments with vaccine should aggressively reach out to vaccinate persons in the priority groups established on October 5. These persons include those at highest risk for complications from influenza and health-care professionals caring for persons at high risk, and should remain a focus even where vaccine supplies are sufficient to support expansion to other groups.

The NYSDOH will continue to give priority in the distribution of any available vaccine supplies to counties that indicate any ongoing need for vaccine to reach these priority groups, and will support any county health department that continues to restrict vaccination to persons in the October 5, 2004 priority risk groups based on local need and circumstances.

Local health departments that have vaccine and that have already met the needs of high risk individuals, may offer flu shots to anyone age 50 and older and to household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of high risk individuals starting on January 3. However, local health departments may also choose to defer expansion of their vaccination programs until they are satisfied that the high-risk need in their county is met.

In mid-to-late January, approximately 70,000 additional doses of flu vaccine will be distributed by NYSDOH to local health departments. Eligible individuals who cannot get a flu shot yet could still benefit from vaccination at that time.

Updated Standard of Care for Influenza Vaccination in New York State.

Previously, inactivated influenza vaccine should have been administered only to persons in the following priority groups:

- all children aged 6–23 months;
- adults aged ≥ 65 years;
- persons aged 2–64 years with underlying chronic medical conditions;
- all women who will be pregnant during the influenza season;
- residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities;
- children aged 2–18 years on chronic aspirin therapy;
- health-care workers involved in direct patient care; and
- out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of children aged < 6 months.

Effective January 3, 2005, based on the assessment of efforts to date to reach the above priority groups, where there are sufficient influenza vaccine supplies available, vaccine may be given to the following additional groups.

- out-of-home caregivers and household contacts of persons in high-risk groups (e.g., persons aged ≥ 65 years; persons with chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart or lung disease, or weakened immune systems because of illness or medication; and children aged < 2 years); and
- all adults aged 50–64 years.

In light of this season's urgent influenza vaccine shortage, the NYSDOH expects all health care providers to strictly adhere to these updated recommendations for influenza vaccination during the 2004-05 season. The NYSDOH has determined that these updated recommendations for influenza vaccination are the standard of care in New York State. As such, it is expected that all physicians, nurses and licensed health care facilities will adhere to these recommendations. Failure to comply may subject the individual and/or the health care facility to penalties including fines and licensure sanctions specified in the Public Health Law, or for professionals licensed by the State Education Department, referral to that agency.

3. Previous Expansion of Childhood Eligibility for VFC Influenza Vaccine.

As reported previously, CDC has expanded the groups of VFC children who are eligible to receive VFC influenza vaccine, effective December 17, 2004. Please see the NYSDOH Influenza Vaccine Shortage Advisory Update #8 of December 21, 2004, for details.